

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJ: TIMOR: NASCENT CIVIL WAR

SUMMARY: GOP ADMITS TOTAL LOSS OF CONTROL IN TIMOR; SITUATION IN DILI ONE OF "CIVIL WAR" FRETILIN BLAMED FOR SITUATION; UDT RECEIVED "GREEN LIGHT" FROM INDONESIA FOR AUG 10 COUP. END SUMMARY.

1. TIMOR FIGHTING WORSENS: THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCE ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON AUG 21 STATING THAT THE SITUATION IN TIMOR HAS WORSENER APPRECIABLY IN THE LAST FEW HOURS. THE VIOLENCE HAS BECOME GENERALIZED, WORSENER BY THE DEFECTION OF VIRTUALLY ALL THE NATIVE TIMORESE TROOPS TO THE MILITARY BRANCHES OF THE THREE POLITICAL PARTIES. CIVILIAN DEATHS ARE SAID TO RUN INTO THE HUNDREDS, THOUGH NO DEATHS AMONG PORTUGUESE MILITARY OR CIVILIANS WERE REPORTED. IN DILI, FRETILIN FORCES CONTROLLED THE MILITARY BARRACKS AND HEADQUARTERS; MILITARY GOVERNOR COL. LEMOS PIRES CHARACTERIZED THE SITUATION IN THE CITY AS ONE OF "FULL CIVIL WAR." THE SITUATION IN THE INTERIOR IS UNKNOWN DUE TO A DISRUPTION OF ALL COMMUNICATIONS.

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2. GOP RESPONSE: ON AUG 21 IN MACAO, MAJ. MORAIS SANTOS, CABINET

CHIEF FOR MACAO, RELEASED A COMMUNIQUE ADMITTING THAT THE PORTUGUESE HAD LOST CONTROL OF THE SITUATION AND OF ALL THE TERRITORY IN TIMOR, SAVE FOR A SMALL NEUTRAL AZONE IN THE DILI PORT WHICH WAS BEING USED AS A REFUGEE CENTER FOR FOREIGNERS AND PORTUGUESE NATIONALS. AN URGENT APPEAL FOR A SHIP TO EVACUATE THE 1,400 REFUGEES NOW IN THAT CAMP WAS MADE BY THE DILI AUTHORITIES. SANTOS ALSO STATED THAT "IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION CAN ONLY BE CONTROLLED BY AN INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION, AND THE LONGER THE DELAY, THE MORE VICTIMS THERE WILL BE." SANTOS DID NOT SPECIFY THE FORM OF INTERVENTION HE HAD IN MIND.

3. TROUBLES BLAMED ON FRETILIN: MAJ. FRANCISCO FERNANDO DA MOTA, RECENTLY RETURNED FROM TIMOR AFTERSERVING AS CHIEF OF CABINET IN THE CABINET OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, ANALYZED THE TIMOR SITUATION DURING AN AUG 21 TELEVISION INTERVIEW. MOTA MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE GOP CONSIDERED FRETILIN THE CHIEF CULPRIT BEHIND THE CURRENT TROUBLES BECAUSE OF ITS BEHAVIOR, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE UDT AUG 10 ATTEMPTED COUP, CHARACTERIZED BY AN "INABILITY TO DIALOGUE, WHETHER WITH OPPOSING FORCES OR WITH THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT." FRETILIN REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MACAO SUMMIT AND DEMONSTRATED CONTEMPT FOR TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC NORMS. THIS AGGRAVATED THE MUTUAL DISTRUST AMONG THE PARTIES, LEADING EACH TO ARM ITSELF.

4. UDT AUGUST 10 COUP ATTEMPT; MOTA STATED THAT THE UDT AUG 10 COUP WAS PRECEDED BY A VISIT TO JAKARTA BY TWO IMPORTANT UDT LEADERS, SECRETARY GENERAL JOAO CARLOS CALADO AND SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS DOMINGOS DE OLIVEIRA. MOTA ADDED THAT IN JAKARTA THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS " POSSIBLY RECEIVED SOME AID OR A GREEN LIGHT FOR THE LAUNCHING OF SOME SPECIFIC ACTION, IN REALITY IT WAS IN CONSEQUENCE OF THAT VISIT THAT THE UDT LAUNCHED ITS COUP." UDT WAS SUPPORTED ON ITS AUG 10 ATTEMPT BY POLICE CHIEF MAGGIOLO GOUVEIA, WHO "CONNIVED" TO PLACE HIS 300-MAN FORCE AT THE DISPOSAL OF UDT LEADERS. MILITARY BARRACKS WERE SURROUNDED BECAUSE THE MAJORITY OF THE TROOPS WERE KNOWN SYMPATHIZERS OF FRETILIN. GOP AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO RIVAL GROUPS, BUT FAILED WHEN FRETILIN PRECONDITIONS FOR NEGOTIATION AMOUNTED TO THE VIRTUAL DISSOLUTION OF THE UDT. AT THIS STAGE UDT WENT TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES WITH ITS "ULTIMATUM," AND ARGUED THAT UNLESS FRETILIN WAS NEUTRALIZED, INDONESIA WOULD INTERVENE, SIMULTANEOUSLY CAUSING THE UNITED STATES TO "COME OUT WITH ITS PLANES AND FLYING FORTRESSES FROM THE BOME BASE IN OPPOSITION TO THE INVASION." THIS WOULD TRANSFORM TIMOR, CLAIMED THE UDT, INTO A "SCORCHED EARTH ZONE." MOTA NOTED THAT GOP AUTHORITIES DISMISSED THIS SCENARIO AS UNLIKELY.

4. FINAL ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATION: ON AUG 17, THE PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTED ONE LAST TIME TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS, THIS TIME THROUGH THE MILITARY UNITS. COMMITTEES IN ALL UNITS DISCUSSED THE SITUATION AND REACHED COMMON AGREEMENT ON THREE POINTS: NEED FOR INDEPENDENCE; FREEDOM FOR ALL IDEOLOGIES WITHIN TIMOR, EXCEPTING THE COMMUNIST; AND UNITY OF THE TIMORESE PEOPLE. THESE STIPULATIONS WERE ACCEPTABLE TO THE UDT. FRETELIN, HOWEVER, DID NOT ACCEPT THEM OR EVEN ENTER INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS. THIS ACTION, STATED MOTA, MADE INEVITABLE THE CURRENT BLOOD BATH IN TIMOR.
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